



STATE OF INDIANA
Department of Correction

Indiana Government Center – South

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Edwin G. Buss
Commissioner

April 18, 2010

Dear Colleague:

This week, April 18 – 24, National Crime Victims' Rights Week, spotlights our nation's response to victims of crime. This year's theme, ***"Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect."*** captures the principles that inspired the victims' rights movement. Unfortunately, victim notification, victims' compensation, and other support services were not always available to those harmed by crime. Consequently, due to lack of services, support and adequate resources many crime victims did in fact experience inequity, indignity and disrespect. Yet years of hard work led by survivors and victims' advocates has led to federal and state legislative landmarks ensuring victims' rights and ensuring support and services to victims and their families in their time of need.

As of 2010, every state has passed victims' rights laws, and 32 states have constitutional victims' rights amendments. All states have victim compensation funds, and more than 10,000 victim assistance programs exist throughout the country. Such changes have made victims participants, rather than bystanders, in the criminal justice system.

The Indiana Department of Correction fully supports victims' rights and offers programs and services at each of its correctional facilities that allow victims to be informed through notification efforts, sex and violent offender registration, victim restitution and support through work release efforts, in addition to allowing victims and advocates direct opportunities to interact and educate offenders on the effects of crime.

The Department has led statewide efforts for victim notification through Indiana SAVIN. The SAVIN program provides crime victims and other concerned citizens access to a toll-free number and web site where they can receive real-time information about the current status of offenders held in local jails, state prisons, and local court systems. This service is FREE to victims and the public and helps keep them involved in the criminal justice system.

The ALERT Notification Service provides citizens living near state correctional facilities with information via phone or cell phone regarding facility emergency situations or escapes.

Registrants receive a phone call if an emergency situation or an escape occurs and then will be notified again when the situation is resolved.

Correctional facilities around the state are observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week through guest speakers, victim centered presentations, balloon releases, and ceremonial plantings. Through these efforts, students, offenders, and staff are being reminded of the effects of crime and the importance of victims in improving the criminal justice system.

In 2010, the Department is planning to develop restorative justice efforts in each of its adult and juvenile correctional facilities. These efforts will allow crime victims to directly interact with offenders while encouraging offenders to take responsibility for their actions. These efforts will help victims heal, offenders to become accountable, and to reduce recidivism.

I encourage you to remember the efforts and struggles of victims during this important week as well as throughout the year and would like to personally thank you for your work on making Indiana a leader in providing resources and services to victims of crime. I am eager to continue working with you on these efforts and look forward to the new partnerships that will be developed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin G. Buss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Edwin G. Buss
Commissioner
Indiana Department of Correction